



**(U) TRAILBLAZER: Not Just an 11-Letter Word**

FROM: (Name Withheld by Request)  
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(U//FOUO) As a dyed-in-the-wool SIGINTER recently assigned (analyst comment: note my lack of the use of "volunteer") to TRAILBLAZER, I approached my new job with a certain skepticism. I knew TRAILBLAZER had been around for a while... and I had steadfastly avoided it. The best analogy in my own experience was NSOC. After also steadfastly avoiding NSOC for years due to the shift work, I finally accepted a position there. What I found in NSOC was a job and work environment sufficiently rewarding that it moved me to volunteer for another position and a second tour there later in my career. Now that I'm on the TRAILBLAZER team, I can see where history may repeat itself!

(U//FOUO) Upon arrival I did, of course, get all the new-person briefings and was referred to the TRAILBLAZER homepage for additional background information. But I also did some research on my own, and what I learned was: I hadn't been paying attention the last four years!!! Here are just a few things the Director of NSA told all of us:

- "We are beginning TRAILBLAZER 1. It is the prototype of our future." (DIRgram-37, 1/14/00)
- "TRAILBLAZER 1 will map ... mission requirements to our cryptologic architecture and provide implementation focus." (DIRgram-45, 2/3/00)
- "TRAILBLAZER is the core of our strategy to exploit the global digital net and to transform how we satisfy our customers' information needs." (DIRgram-122, 9/18/00)
- "The TRAILBLAZER Technology Development Platform (TDP)... represents a significant step forward in NSA's transformation. It demonstrates to our stakeholders, customers, overseers, and partners, our continued commitment to transformation, despite many mission pressures." (DIRgram-239, 6/13/02)
- "Our top operational priority is the transformation of NSA into an enterprise that scales to the challenge of the 21st Century target environment. Key to building an agile SIGINT enterprise is a strategy in which the stovepiped solutions of the past are replaced by a highly integrated, enterprise-level system-of-systems that closely couples our acquisition programs. These programs include: TRAILBLAZER ..." (DIRgram-287, 9/02/03)

OK, the Director of NSA obviously got it. I had to wonder why I didn't. This is IMPORTANT stuff!

(U//FOUO) I still have a lot to learn. So many different organizational elements and so many different disciplines are involved that the complexity is daunting. And if you go looking for answers, you'll quickly learn that the perspectives of the people in those various disciplines still influence how the TRAILBLAZER story gets told. Even in official documentation, it is (accurately) described as both "a major DoD-NSA/CSS acquisition program" and "a major transformation program."

(U//FOUO) The best, most up-to-date big picture I've found is in the TRAILBLAZER Program Management Plan, which was published last November. In it, the Program Manager effectively lays out the purpose and goals of the program. I would encourage everyone in SID to take the time to look at it. A copy is available on-line on the [TRAILBLAZER homepages](#) under the "Tools" section.

(U//FOUO) Reading both on and between the lines of all that, I rather quickly came to one

inevitable conclusion: The future and the success of the National Security Agency's SIGINT mission is inextricably linked to the success of the TRAILBLAZER Program. We have to make this work.

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(U//FOUO) If you have questions about TRAILBLAZER, contact [REDACTED] ) Chief, TRAILBLAZER Mission Office, at [REDACTED].

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